

We claim:

1 1. A method for providing a relational view of electronic objects, comprising steps of:
2 obtaining organizing rules for organizing electronic objects;
3 applying the obtained organizing rules against one or more electronic objects, yielding
4 organized electronic objects; and
5 rendering the organized electronic objects.

1 2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the rendering comprises a hierarchical view.

3 3. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the rendering comprises a nodal view.

4 4. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the rendering comprises a network view.

5 5. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the rendering comprises a visual view.

1 6. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the electronic objects comprise at least one of
2 e-mail messages, textual documents, and image files.

1 7. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the organizing rules specify node-specific
2 organizing criteria for a multi-level index.

1 8. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of repeating operation of

2 the applying step and the rendering step upon occurrence of a new electronic object.

1 9. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of repeating operation of
2 the applying step and the rendering step upon modification of the organizing rules.

1 10. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of repeating operation of
2 the applying step and the rendering step upon request of a user.

1 11. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the organizing rules specify one or more of
2 text characters, text words, and text phrases as organizing criteria.

1 12. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the organizing rules specify image files as
2 organizing criteria.

1 13. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of defining the organizing
2 rules, further comprising steps of:

3 retrieving a selection of categories;

4 enabling a user to select one or more of the retrieved categories; and

5 for each selected category, enabling the user to build at least one rule.

1 14. The method according to Claim 13, wherein the step of enabling the user to build at least
2 one rule further comprises the steps of:

3 retrieving a selection of organizing criteria;
4 enabling the user to select one or more of the retrieved organizing criteria; and
5 formatting a particular rule from the selected retrieved organizing criteria.

1 15. A system for providing a relational view of electronic objects, comprising:
2 means for obtaining organizing rules for organizing electronic objects, wherein the
3 organizing rules specify node-specific organizing criteria for a multi-level index;
4 means for applying the obtained organizing rules against one or more electronic objects,
5 yielding organized electronic objects; and
 means for rendering the organized electronic objects.

1 16. A computer program product for providing a relational view of electronic objects, the
2 computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media and comprising:
3 computer-readable program code means for obtaining organizing rules for organizing
4 electronic objects, wherein the organizing rules specify node-specific organizing criteria for a
5 multi-level index;
6 computer-readable program code means for applying the obtained organizing rules against
7 one or more electronic objects, yielding organized electronic objects; and
8 computer-readable program code means for rendering the organized electronic objects.